

# FEEDING CHILDREN IN YOUR COMMUNITY THROUGH SUMMER FOOD

The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides federal reimbursement for nutritious meals served to children in low-income areas when school is not in session. Schools, local government agencies and non-profit organizations can sponsor the SFSP. Sponsors are responsible for administering the program at feeding sites. Organizations that are unable to sponsor the SFSP can also participate in the program by partnering with another organization in the community.

We have formed a partnership to encourage broader use of SFSP, and we need your help in promoting this very needed and underutilized program. We encourage you to get the word out on SFSP to your members.

This booklet contains brief descriptions of programs from around the country that have successfully implemented the SFSP in their community. It is our hope that these success stories will provide ideas and encouragement for other programs that want to become involved in the SFSP. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children everywhere!

Sincerely,

*USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, Child Nutrition Division  
Food Research and Action Center  
America's Second Harvest  
American School Food Service Association*

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For more information, or to apply to participate, please contact your Summer Food State agency. A list of State agencies can be found on the SFSP website at [www.summerfood.usda.gov](http://www.summerfood.usda.gov)

## **ENERGY EXPRESS Communities throughout West Virginia**

Energy Express is a six-week summer program which assists children living in rural low-income areas across West Virginia by: (1) providing summer learning experiences focused on reading; (2) serving two nutritious meals each day through Summer Food; (3) engaging college students as mentors; and (4) developing strong partnerships which involve the parents, schools, communities, state agencies and organizations.

As part of the program, mentors and children share breakfast and lunch together. This time together becomes an important learning experience as children make choices and engage in group discussions. Nutrition education is also integrated with the children's reading, writing and art activities.

The results of the program demonstrate how successful it is. In 2000, 202,536 meals were served; more than 72,912 volunteer hours were logged; and participating children had an average reading gain of one month in word identification, three months in comprehension and almost four months in overall reading.

This sponsor is also an AmeriCorps grantee.

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## **COLLIER COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT Naples, Florida**

What started as an enhancement to the Immokalee Summer Program run by the Collier County Parks and Recreation Department, Summer Food in Collier County has grown to serve a diverse population of children, including the children of migrant workers, at a variety of sites. In 1984, its first year of operation, the program served over 2,100 lunches. The program now serves over 81,000 breakfasts and over 104,000 lunches at two dozen sites throughout the County, during a 39-day period.

Collier County Summer Food sites include a migrant public housing facility; day care centers; summer schools; YMCAs, and parks and recreation sites. The school district provides meal components to the program and kitchen space and equipment for the assembly of the meals. Summer Food employees who assemble and pack the meals are hired from the school district food service personnel.

Local businesses provide important assistance to the program. For example, a local food vendor provides meal components. A restaurant provides breakfast burritos at half price, and a car rental agency rents 10 vehicles to the program at a discount.

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**PUTNAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM  
Palatka, Florida**

Typically migrant parents do not have access to transportation and work 10 to 12 hours a day. In an environment where the parents spend most of the day away from home, the Putnam County Public School's Summer Program provides structured activities and nutritious meals to the children of these workers. The Putnam County School District Migrant Education Program provides transportation for children to the lunch site. Vans were secured through a local migrant advocate group to assist with the sponsor's transportation needs.

Each day the children are encouraged to eat all of their lunch and are challenged to try new foods. Success of the program is demonstrated by the 95% attendance rate and attitude of the children.

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**SPOKANE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Spokane, Washington**

While many school districts serve summer meals to kids during summer school, Spokane School District's Food Service Director, Doug Wordell, knows that kids are hungry all summer long, regardless of whether or not they attend summer school. Therefore, Spokane School District runs their Summer Food Program from two days after school ends in June until three days before school begins in the fall at every school in which over 50% of students are low-income. They also provide meals at city parks, community centers and YMCAs throughout Spokane. Two-thirds of the meal sites offer additional summer activities.

As a result, the Spokane Summer Food Program provides about 1,000 breakfasts and over 2,500 lunches per day for 48 to 50 days each summer.

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## KENT SCHOOL DISTRICT Kent, Washington

Kent School District's dedication to all of Kent's children is best demonstrated by their Summer Food Program. The Food Service Director, Daniel Johnson, secured a school bus for meal service and painted it to look like a deli sandwich. The Campus Café, as it is called, makes stops at three different apartment complexes, serving over 100 kids lunch during the summer months. Johnson converted the bus to a roaming summer meal site when he realized that the program is most successful when you take the food to where the kids live. At each stop, the kids file in, pick up their meal and eat airplane style, with shelves attached to the back of each seat. Kent School District operates a total of 21 Summer Food sites in schools, housing complexes and parks throughout Kent.

The commitment to ensuring kids are healthy and fed doesn't stop at the Food Service Department. School board members as well as the Superintendent, Barbara Grohe, recognize that good health and nutrition are fundamental in increasing student achievement and accountability. "Healthy minds live in healthy bodies," says Grohe.

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## IOWA LAKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE UPWARD BOUND Estherville, Iowa

Like most Upward Bound programs, Iowa Lakes motivates low-income, rural youth to pursue postsecondary education. During the summer, Iowa Lake Upward Bound runs a summer residential camp, and Summer Food helps provide sixty campers with three meals per day.

Iowa Lakes is a rural, isolated area of farms, at least a hundred miles from the nearest city. The program exposes the campers to diverse cultures they otherwise may not experience through weekly "Cultural Cuisine Nights." These special evenings usually feature a parent, grandparent, or staff member who gives a presentation about foreign culture, and a meal featuring the cuisine of that culture.

Roger Hayenga, director of Iowa Lakes Upward Bound, welcomes the support of Summer Food. The reimbursements help the camp afford a wider variety of higher quality food, while the meal pattern requirements help the camp provide the students with better nutrition.

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**INDIANAPOLIS PARKS AND RECREATION  
DEPARTMENT**  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Responding to a challenge from the Mayor’s office to feed lower income children in the Indianapolis community, the Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department operated 17 Summer Program feeding sites during summer 2001. Indy Parks and Rec worked closely with the Indiana Department of Education to identify eligible areas and avoid any duplication of coverage by existing sponsors.

The sponsor contracted with a vendor to prepare and deliver approximately 800-1,000 meals per day. Meals were served at sites with existing activity programs. Activities at the sites included arts and crafts, sports, drama, music, environmental and safety education and much more. One of their greatest challenges was keeping foods at appropriate temperatures at their many outdoor sites. Indy Parks and Rec successfully overcame this barrier by purchasing special coolers and working with their vendor to establish a delivery schedule that would accommodate each site’s serving schedule and minimize holding times.

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**GREENE COUNTY SUMMER ENRICHMENT  
PROGRAM**  
Stanardsville, Virginia

The Greene County Summer Enrichment Program serves a large population of children from rural areas and children with special needs. It keeps children busy with activities that focus on the community. Such activities include: making bi-weekly visits to a local senior citizens center to interact with the elderly in their community; going to the library (children are issued their own cards); and visiting the Greene County Sheriff’s Department in which each child is issued a personal identification card with their photograph.

Throughout the summer, public transportation is used to take participating children on field trips in the community. This teaches the children how to read a bus schedule. Parents have commented that they liked the idea of having adults teach kids the ins-and-outs of public transportation.

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## **NORTH COUNTRY HOSPITAL Newport, Vermont**

North Country Hospital in Newport, Vermont, sponsors six Summer Food sites in a very rural area of the state. Teamwork among the feeding sites, a local non-profit, and the hospital is the key to the overcoming the challenges of serving over 150 children each day for seven weeks. North Country's Summer Food sites include a public school's morning reading program, a Catholic school's summer day camp, a Parks and Recreation Department day camp on the shores of a lake, and the local day care centers' *Reading in the Park* program.

According to Rich Bruno, director of food service at North Country Hospital, individual contributions of time and effort are crucial to the success of this program. The staff of some of the sites help out by picking up coolers filled with meals from North County and returning them at the end of the day. A staff person from a local non-profit takes on the responsibility of monitoring the sites. If there are delivery challenges, maintenance staff from the hospital volunteer their time and personal vehicles to deliver meals to sites. At other times, Bruno drives the hospital pick-up truck or his own van to deliver meals himself.

With such community support, Bruno needs to hire only one driver and one food preparation worker each summer for the Summer Food Program. He is able to break even on operating costs, and the administrative reimbursements help pay for part of the salaries of permanent hospital staff who also work on the Summer Food Program.

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## **CLINTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION Albany, Kentucky**

Parent volunteers are the key to the success of Summer Food in Clinton County, Kentucky, a rural county that has been struggling through factory closings for many years. By coordinating and supervising the sites in their communities, these parents enable the Clinton County Board of Education to sponsor Summer Food for over 40 days each summer.

From the Monday after school ends until the week before school begins each year, the program serves almost 600 children per day. With the children spread out across a rural area, the Clinton County Board of Education delivers meals to dozens of sites, even ones that may serve only a handful of children each day. To set up a site, parents place picnic tables under trees. When it rains, they set up card tables in a hallway of their housing complex.

Coordinating with the Board of Education's transportation department reduces Summer Food costs. The Board purchases surplus vehicles at a low cost, which are then repaired by the Board's mechanics.

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## **CAMP KIWANIS** **Lynn, Massachusetts**

The City of Lynn Parks and Recreation Department runs Camp Kiwanis, a full-day camp for special needs children, for six weeks every summer. Through the Summer Food Program, Camp Kiwanis serves breakfast and lunch to over 50 children from Monday through Friday.

The children who attend Camp Kiwanis, who have various learning, emotional and physical challenges, participate in stimulating recreational activities in the Lynn woods. Participants hike, play sports, enjoy a wading pool, take field trips, and participate in skills contests and talent shows.

Camp Kiwanis provides door-to-door transportation for each camper. The camp also provides learning opportunities for its staff of high school and college students who are interested in psychology, social work and education.

## **KICKAPOO TRADITIONAL TRIBE OF TEXAS** **Eagle Pass, Texas**

By working together, the summer youth programs of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas are able to provide free meals and a range of enrichment and recreational activities to children during the summer. In an area where 92% of the children qualify for free or reduced price school meals, Kickapoo Summer Food provides about 160 Native American children with free breakfast and lunch every day.

Kickapoo Summer Food serves all the children at one site, a Head Start building that would otherwise be closed during the summer. Most of the children who participate in the program attend other summer activities during the day on different parts of the reservation, including summer school, arts and crafts activities, sports and at-risk intervention programs.

Since the feeding site is relatively small, the different programs coordinate their schedules to stagger the meal times. The children who participate in nearby programs walk to the site, while the other programs transport the children to the feeding site. Some children are brought to the site by their parents.

The Social Services Director of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas says the required paperwork for Summer Food is easy to complete. To her, ensuring that the program runs well every summer is well worth the effort, especially when she sees the children smiling, laughing and eating together each day.

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**LITTLE RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**Ware Shoals, South Carolina**

The sponsor is committed to expanding its program as demonstrated by the 58% increase in lunches served in 2001. Each year, Little River holds two planning meetings, one in February and one in April, with its partnering organizations which are from all sectors of the community—education, religion, business and the civic arena. The sponsor promotes Summer Food through radio advertisements and flyers which are placed in bags at grocery stores, on windshields at shopping malls, and in mailboxes. Local churches and Girl and Boy Scout Troops also assist the sponsor in distributing informational flyers. Other creative ideas which improve the Little River program include: the existence of a parent advisory group; a bi-weekly newsletter which is sent to parents of participating children; and free health care screening services to attending children and their parents.

Contact: Rev. Sylvester Jackson

**NEW MADRID COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
**New Madrid, Missouri**

The staff at the New Madrid County Health Department are dedicated to making sure the children living in the community are healthy. The Department serves 3,000-4,000 kids each day at 30 feeding sites for 11 weeks during the summer. The success of serving this rural population rests in the grass-roots outreach efforts of its staff. Information networking within the community helps build trust among its members. The program grew through partnerships with local Head Start Centers, County Health Center WIC Programs, School Districts and the Delta Economic Opportunity Corporation. These partnerships have given the community a sense of ownership and pride in the Summer Program as people feel an attachment to the feeding sites.

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## **GORDON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL**

### **Gordon, Nebraska**

For several years, Barbara Shald of Gordon, Nebraska—a town of about 1,800 in the northwestern part of the state—was aware of the need for a summer feeding program. As a former school nurse, she knows many children in the community receive free and reduced price lunches during the school year. She knows those same kids can benefit from free meals in the summer.

Ms. Shald approached Gladys Phemister, the CEO of the hospital, with her idea. Phemister knew the hospital could easily prepare meals for the children, but she would need a place to serve the food. A conversation with the minister at the town's First Presbyterian Church provided a solution.

Sponsor staff transport the food and oversee the program. The sponsor also tapped a local volunteer group which provided two volunteers every day to help feed and supervise the kids. About 30 to 40 children came to the church for lunch each day.

“As a hospital, part of our mission is to meet the needs of community. I see good nutrition as part of health care, and kids can't function at their highest level without good nutrition,” Phemister says. “It wasn't difficult at all. In fact, it's probably one of the easiest community programs we've done,” she added.

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## **HORRY COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Horry and Georgetown Counties, South Carolina**

Horry County partners with diverse community groups to serve Summer Food. Sites include elementary and middle schools, churches, Boys and Girls Clubs, the Salvation Army and a local karate club. In addition, a van serves as a mobile feeding site where there are small pockets of needy children. Lunch is served to the children picnic-style at each mobile site. The sponsor finds this the most cost-effective way to serve groups of 30 or fewer children.

A key partnership is with the school district, which vends the lunches to the county. Summer Food employs school cafeteria workers and school bus drivers who otherwise would not have work over the summer. Since the cafeteria workers and bus drivers are regularly employed by the school district, the sponsor finds them to be reliable and efficient. While Horry County leases three trucks for delivering the meals, the school district provides all the infrastructure and equipment for meal preparation.

Another key to success is good people who care about children. Last summer, the staff learned that by taking on the operation of Georgetown County Summer Food for the first time, the combined budget for Horry and Georgetown Counties was strained. To help eliminate the budget gap, the sponsor's staff donated their time for the last two weeks of work.

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## KIDS FIRST AND THE RHODE ISLAND TEAM NUTRITION TRAINING INSTITUTE Rhode Island

Each summer since 1998, Kids First has delivered a *Chefs and Nutritionists in the Parks* series in several inner city communities. Partnerships were developed with the Girl Scouts, Channel One in Central Falls and the Woonsocket Housing Authority to provide both in-kind and monetary resources for the series.

A Team Nutrition-trained chef and nutritionist are partnered with a Summer Food site coordinator to plan and conduct nutrition education activities with children at the feeding site. Typically, the nutritionist plans a Food Guide Pyramid game by bringing food models and taping them onto a large Food Guide Pyramid on the pavement. Children are actively engaged in placing the food models in the corresponding food groups while the nutritionist leads a discussion of the types of food in each food group, the recommended number of servings, and the major nutrients. Another chef prepares ingredients for children to assemble their own fun snacks such as “rocket ship salad” or “peanut butter spiders.”

Kids First has found that this type of customized nutrition education programming works well as it directly targets participating children by taking into consideration their backgrounds and interests. The program also captures the interest and enthusiasm of the chef and nutritionist as they have the opportunity to plan and prepare a program that utilizes their skills and talents in a way that they will personally enjoy.

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## ADDISON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Cameron, New York

For 2001, the sponsor expanded the program by adding more activities and extending their times of operation by two hours each day. At each feeding site, children are divided into different age groups and participate in activities that are appropriate for that age. Younger children have a “quiet corner” which allows them to play with crayons, toys and clay.

Older children are encouraged to participate in more challenging activities. For example, older children choose a project in a specific area—photography, needlework, home environment or clothing. Staff help children complete their projects throughout the summer. Projects are then entered in a local fair. Children benefit from the satisfaction of working on a daily project, until it is completed, and from having it on display in a public place. In addition, three professional agencies—Steuben 4-H, the Wellness Council of the Southern Tier and the Cornell Cooperative Extension—come once a week during the program to make special presentations.

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**ONONDAGA NATION SCHOOL**  
**Onondaga, New York**

To keep their students growing and learning during the summer, the Onondaga Nation School in New York offers a summer enrichment program that includes reading, writing, math and social studies. Through Summer Food, the children who attend the program receive snacks and lunches that help give balance and consistency to their diets during the summer.

The school, located on the Onondaga Nation, serves a 100% Native American population. At least 70% of the children who attend the school qualify for free or reduced price school meals. Last summer, Onondaga served about 35 children from kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

The Lafayette School District serves as the sponsor of Summer Food for the Onondaga Nation School. The meals are prepared in the school district kitchen, and the district delivers them to the school.

The Onondaga summer program partners with the State University of New York at Oswego to provide the children with specialized reading instruction. As part of a graduate level course in reading education at Oswego, graduate students visit the Onondaga summer program to provide the children with personalized reading instruction.

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**VOLUNTARIOS UNIDOS SIRVIENDO**  
**CON AMOR**  
**(United Volunteers Serving with Love)**  
**Naranjito, Puerto Rico**

The Naranjito community is an impoverished area that suffers from chronic social, health and economic problems. There are no major industries in this isolated community, and consequently, there is a high unemployment rate. For those who do have jobs, they must commute a long distance to the San Juan metropolitan area. This means that children may spend long hours in the home, unsupervised, when school is not in session. Providing a positive and enriching experience for these children is a major objective of Voluntarios Unidos Sirviendo con Amor.

The program is managed by an independent school food authority which has experience administering Child Nutrition Programs because it also participates in the National School Lunch Program during the school year. Partnerships play a key role in the success of the program. A partnership with the municipality of Naranjito allows the children to go swimming and play volleyball and basketball. The sponsor also partners with the Puerto Rico Department of Health to help meet its transportation needs and to provide anti-drug programs.

The sponsor provides interesting programs to participating children. The programs include dance classes, crafts, theatre and field trips so children can both learn and receive nutritious meals through this program.

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## **SOUTH SIDE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT Hookstown, Pennsylvania**

In rural areas, children eligible to receive free meals during the summer often have no transportation to meal sites, and sponsors cannot afford to staff widely scattered sites that have few participants. Many years ago, the district’s Food Service Director vowed to overcome this challenge by offering free lunches through Summer Food. He has done so with the help of a committed staff, a supportive community and a big yellow bus.

Using knowledge of the community, the sponsor identified trailer parks in three remote pockets of poverty in the school district. Then, the sponsor contracted for the service of a driver and bus, which is transformed each summer into a cafeteria on wheels.

The South Side Area School District runs part of its Summer Food program in the high school cafeteria for children who can make it there. But for those children without transportation, a school bus makes three stops Monday through Friday to provide them a nutritious lunchtime meal. Children line up and step onto the bus, which has been converted into a cafeteria by removing the last four rows of seats to make room for a serving table and hot/cold storage containers.

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## **KIDS CAFÉ Reno, Nevada**

Begun by the Food Bank of Northern Nevada, corporate partners were secured to provide startup funding for the Reno Kids Cafe. These partners included utility companies and a major banking partner, which continue to support the program today. Local foundations provided funding for equipment such as milk coolers and rethermalization units. Summer Food covers food costs.

It was quickly determined that a collaborative partnership would be the best model to serve a large number of children in many locations. A partnership with the health department ensures high quality food sanitation. Meals are vended by the school district, in order to provide hot, nutritious meals that meet the USDA meal pattern. Meal site partners include municipal recreation programs, non-profit organizations, neighborhood churches, the YMCA and the Cooperative Extension. As part of their agreement, meal site partners agree to provide site cooks and feed any neighborhood child who comes for a free meal.

This arrangement ensures that the Kids Café program is well managed and financially accountable, that costs are shared by several organizations and that meal programs are provided in the most at risk neighborhoods. This model is currently being expanded to address childhood hunger throughout the state, in collaboration with the Nevada Department of Education and local partners.

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**NELSONVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**Nelsonville, Ohio**

Since 1997, the Nelsonville Public Library system has been offering Summer Food at libraries located in low-income areas in conjunction with their summer reading program. After starting with one site, Nelsonville has expanded to four libraries, serving about 100 children per day.

Summer Food attracts children who might not otherwise visit the library during the summer. At the end of the morning's *Book Camp* activities, lunch is served to all the children. Many of the children then choose to stay in the library for the rest of the afternoon, reading by themselves.

Nelsonville partners with the local Meals-on-Wheels to prepare the lunches for the children. Meals-on-Wheels uses its existing food transportation equipment to deliver the meals to the libraries.

Professional magicians, storytellers and puppeteers entertain the children in the program. Librarians also find creative ways to explore themes with the kids. Last summer, one librarian created a yoga program for kids. Another librarian focused on fabrics and taught the children how to weave on a Navajo loom. Another librarian taught the children to fold Japanese paper cranes. All activities were tied in to children's books on those subjects.

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**VINITA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Vinita, Oklahoma**

Vinita Public Schools discovered the ingredients for success when combining nutritious meals with fun activities for their *Summer Sun and Fun* feeding program. To enhance the program the sponsor partnered with different public and private organizations to expose the children to educational and enrichment activities that no agency alone could provide. Children learned about wildlife, nature, cultural diversity, personal safety, water safety, first aid, physical education, self-esteem and career opportunities. After four weeks of *Food, Sun, and Fun* children were able to complete their summers and face the new school year armed with knowledge and excitement to challenge their futures.

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